



## Improving Educational Opportunities for Children with Disabilities

999 Asylum Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Hartford, CT 06105  
(860) 560-1711 Fax: (860) 560-1750

SpEdConnecticut, a non-profit organization, provides training and support to families of children with special education learning needs of all kinds. We are compelled to comment on HRB No. 5562, Section 1, An Act Concerning Special Education.

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, members of the Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address the topic of dyslexia, a reading disability affecting many of our clients.

Dyslexia - what does it mean? According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary: "a variable often familial learning disability involving difficulties in acquiring and processing language that is typically manifested by a lack of proficiency in reading, spelling and writing."

The medical definition describes dyslexia as "a neurological disorder causing inability or great difficulty in learning to read or spell, despite normal intelligence. It inhibits recognition and processing of graphic symbols, particularly those pertaining to language. Symptoms, including very poor reading skills, reversed word and letter sequences, and illegible handwriting, usually become evident in the early school years. With early recognition and specialized approaches to teaching reading most dyslexics can learn to read. Anomalies have recently been found in reading-related pathways in the brains of dyslexic persons."

What is missing from the definitions is a description of the emotional toll dyslexia has on children with the disorder. They are described as lazy, inattentive, lacking motivation. What comes naturally to more than half of their classmates, is an impossible task for the student with dyslexia.

Dyslexia has been recognized in medical circles since the late 1800's. In the 1930's, a gifted educator developed a successful approach to teaching these children.

Connecticut can do better. Connecticut teachers want to do better for students with dyslexia. We need to begin now. How?

1. Define the term and disseminate it to all educators and parents of young children.
2. Provide pre-service and in-service professional development for educators on dyslexia's neurological basis.
3. Recognize the early indicators of dyslexia so appropriate interventions can begin to create new neural pathways to assure educational success.
4. Teach teachers how to deliver research-based, systematic, code-based direct reading instruction.

We are encouraged that the dyslexia discussion is beginning but needs to be expanded. Thank you for your time and consideration of this unique specific learning disability.

Harriet R. Clark, M.S.  
Secretary to the Board of Directors  
SpEdConnecticut

### **SpEdConnecticut, Inc.**

*A Non-Profit Agency Serving Children and Adults with Educational Disabilities*  
Web Site: [spedconnecticut.org](http://spedconnecticut.org) Email: [info@spedconnecticut.org](mailto:info@spedconnecticut.org)